



**STATE OF VERMONT**  
**Department of Education**  
**120 State Street**  
**Montpelier, VT 05620-2501**

## **Federal Funds Available for Vermont's Lowest Achieving Schools**

**MONTPELIER** – A new federal regulation from the U.S. Department of Education required states to identify “persistently low-achieving schools” in order to receive federal funding as part of the Statewide Fiscal Stabilization Fund allocations under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA).

“Vermont’s long standing track record of providing a high quality education for our young people did not exempt us from the latest requirement from the U.S. Department of Education (USED) to identify our 10 ‘persistently low-achieving’ schools,” said Rae Ann Knopf, Deputy Commissioner at the Vermont Department of Education. “Nor should it prevent us from providing those and other schools with much needed resources and supports to reach our most disadvantaged kids.”

The USED has allocated \$8 million in additional school improvement funding for these schools in Vermont. Vermont’s Department of Education identified these high-need schools using the 2008 New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP) scores for all students, and scores for those schools over the period that NECAP tests have been administered.

Children who are receiving free and reduced lunch, who have disabilities, and who are English language learners (recent immigrants) typically struggle the most in the testing on reading and mathematics. These funds will provide additional resources to support the work of the educators in those schools to help all children succeed.

The funds do come with conditions. For Vermont’s 10 highest need schools to receive funds, they must be willing to embrace one of four strictly defined models for school improvement as laid out by the USED. The four models include closing the school, closing the school and reopening the school under a Charter or Education Management entity, replacing the principal and 50 percent of the teachers, or implementing a comprehensive ‘transformation’ model which, if not already significantly underway within the last two years, would also necessitate replacing the principal and implementing systemic reform efforts in the coming years. An additional criterion for high schools was to identify any school with graduation rates below 60 percent for two years or more. Vermont has no high schools (as of January 2010) in this category.

The 10 schools identified are Bridport Elementary School, Fair Haven High School, Johnson Elementary School, Mount Abraham Union High School, Northfield Elementary School, Otter Valley High School, Rutland High School, Windsor High School, Winooski High School and H.O. Wheeler Elementary School (since 2009 the Integrated Arts Academy).

“The schools identified still provide a quality education for the majority of their students,” said Commissioner of Education Armando Vilaseca. “In any other state, these schools would not have been identified. But our goal continues to be that all of our schools reach all of our students, and these funds provide an opportunity to further support the students that need it the most.”

###